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OCI No. 2390/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
20 October 1965

Viet Cong Morale:*
A Possible Indicator of
Downward Drift

Summary

Since late last year, the number of Viet Cong military defectors has increased at a substantially higher rate than the number of Viet Cong killed. This would seem to confirm recent reports that the Liberation Army's morale has suffered. The ratio of Viet Cong killed to Viet Cong military ralliers may provide a general, although imprecise, measure of the state of Communist morale in South Vietnam.

1. As fighting in South Vietnam has grown more intense the numbers of Viet Cong killed and Viet Cong ralliers have increased sharply. The rate of increase of defections, however, has been considerably greater than the rate of increase of deaths in combat.

2. In the six-month period from October 1964 to March 1965, 10,966 Viet Cong were reported killed in action. In the next six months--from April to September 1965--16,012 were said to have been slain. This represents a 48-percent increase.

3. During the earlier period, there were 1,610 Viet Cong military defectors, under the Chieu Hoi program. From April to September 1965, however, 4,870 Viet Cong soldiers rallied to the government. This is a 302-percent increase.

*This memorandum is the first experimental product of an effort to provide a better and more current measure of Viet Cong morale. It is being circulated only within CIA. Comments are invited.

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4. A comparison of the percentages seems to confirm a trend observed in two reports on Viet Cong morale, compiled over the past year by [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The first study, based on interviews conducted between July and December 1964 of 145 Viet Cong POWs, defectors, and suspects, indicated that most POWs and defectors believed that the Viet Cong would eventually prevail.

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5. A second study, based on 250 interviews conducted between January and June 1965, reported that the majority of those interviewed claimed that the morale in their particular units had declined, and noted an apparent "lowered expectation of victory among some elements" of the Viet Cong. Interviews conducted since then are said to confirm the January to June findings.

6. A graph of the ratio of Viet Cong killed to Viet Cong military defectors appears to illustrate the trend observed by [REDACTED] reports (see chart). In October and November 1964, only one Viet Cong soldier defected for every nine to ten Viet Cong soldiers reported killed. Since March 1965, at least one defected for every five reported slain.

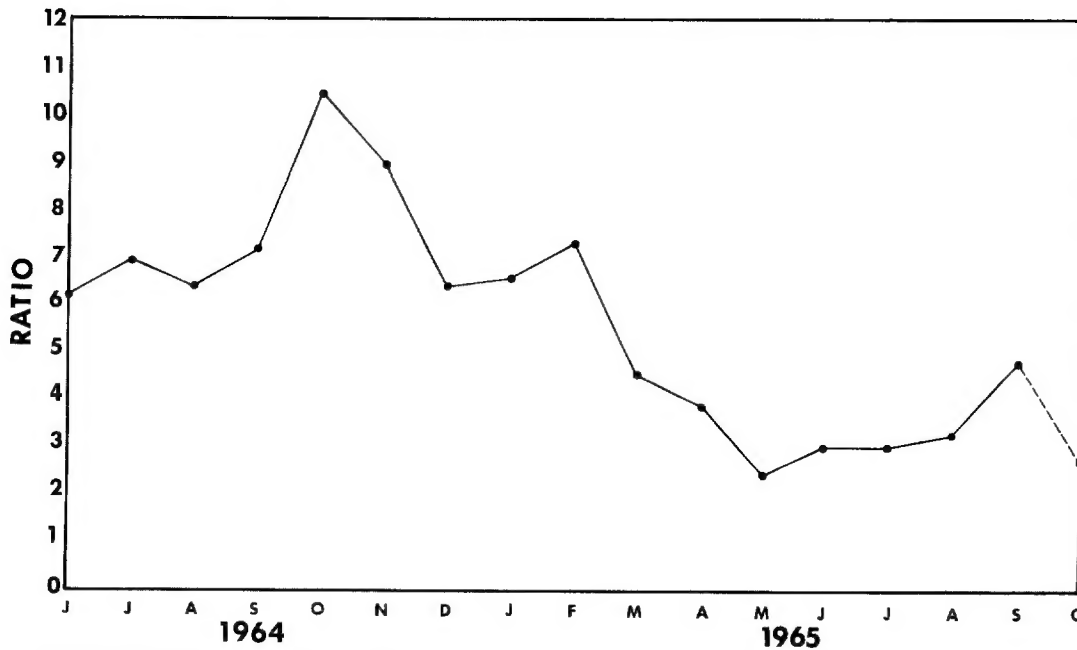
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7. The chart is certainly no precise index of Viet Cong fighting spirit. Statistical aberrations are undoubtedly present, and errors in the reported numbers of killed and defections probably distort some of the monthly ratios. Also, the augmented number of defectors may reflect such factors as the increased use by the Viet Cong of conscription and of the increasing employment of the draftees away from home.

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8. Neither the findings of the interviews conducted by [REDACTED] nor statistical analyses of defector/killed ratios point to a serious deterioration in Viet Cong morale. Defectors are still relatively few, and most Viet Cong soldiers, particularly those in the Main Force, are still fighting well and effectively. Nonetheless, since late last year, the over-all drift of Viet Cong morale seems to be downward. Any significant change in morale may well be reflected in further changes of the defector/killed ratios. (Chart)

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RATIO**VIET CONG KILLED IN ACTION/CHIEU HOI (MILITARY DEFECTORS)**

Date	Viet Cong Killed	Chieu Hoi (MILITARY DEFECTORS)	Ratio
JUN 1964	1005	163	6.2:1
JUL	1427	210	7.0:1
AUG	1449	222	6.5:1
SEP	1187	163	7.3:1
OCT	1617	155	10.4:1
NOV	1747	191	9.1:1
DEC	1813	280	6.4:1
JAN 1965	2203	327	6.7:1
FEB	1564	212	7.4:1
MAR	2022	445	4.5:1
APR	1870	553	3.9:1
MAY	2223	894	2.5:1
JUN	2208	748	3.0:1
JUL	2602	866	3.0:1
AUG	3624	1094	3.3:1
SEP	3485	715	4.9:1
OCT			2.8:1*

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*On basis of 16 days in October

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- (1) Viet Cong Morale: A Possible Indicator of Downward Drift
(2) Leveling Off of Viet Cong Defection Rate

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56-60 D/OSI	-5	90	ADMIN (VM)		-1
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62 Chief, DD/OCR (COLLATERAL)	-1	92, 93	Orig. Div.		-2
63 Asst. to DDI (COLLATERAL)	-1	94, 95	Orig. Br.		-2
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68 NMCC (OPSCEN)	-1				
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